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Two crooks and a lady

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TWO CROOKS AND A LADY

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

EUGENE PILLOT

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TWO CROOKS AND A LADY*

By EUGENE PILLOT

*Note: The author acknowledges his indebtedness to a short story, "Fibre," by Richard Washburn Child, which suggested the play.

CHARACTERS

MILLER, *The Hawk.*
LUCILLE, *his accomplice.*
MRS. SIMS-VANE.
MISS JONES, *her companion.*
POLICE INSPECTOR.
GARRITY, *a policeman.*

TWO CROOKS AND A LADY

SCENE: *Library in the old Fifth Avenue mansion of Mrs. Simms-Vane. It is an old-fashioned thoroughly substantial room and an ideal setting for its owner. French windows, overlooking Fifth Avenue and extending to the floor, are in the middle of the rear wall. Bookcases on each side of them extend to a door at rear right and to a writing desk at left front. There is a chair near the window, one by the table, and one by the desk. Prominent among the usual desk fittings must be a small gold stamp box. A waste-paper basket stands beside the desk, in full view of the audience. Several porcelain vases are placed about the room. A long library table, holding two brass candlesticks, is at right front. Just above it, on the right wall, a large, long mirror hangs so that it reflects the opposite side of the room.*

PLACE: *New York City.*

TIME: *The present. About three o'clock on a rainy afternoon.*

The curtain rises on an empty stage, rather dark because of the rainy day and the drawn curtains The French window in the rear opens cautiously and MILLER *stealthily slips into the room*

He is a tall, handsome man—the usual type of gentleman crook who has emerged from the bottom of his nefarious profession. He wears a dark raincoat and a soft black hat, pulled down a little over his eyes. As he starts to advance into the room, approaching footsteps are heard off right. Frightened, he slips behind the heavy curtains at the window.

LUCILLE *enters from the door at right. She is in the conventional white apron and cap of a well-groomed parlor maid. She stops for a moment to tidy the table, glances up at the mirror, and starts to make a slight readjustment of her cap. Suddenly she realizes that it is too dark for her to see, goes to the window, and quickly pulls back the curtains, flooding the room with light and revealing* MILLER. *The moment she sees* MILLER, *she jumps back frightened.*

LUCILLE. *(In a loud voice)* Miller!

MILLER. *(Frightened, he comes forward cautiously)* Don't shout!

LUCILLE. You nearly scared the life out of me!

MILLER. Don't tell it to the whole house. *(Glances toward door.)* Lucille, anybody about?

(Throughout the following scene, LUCILLE *and* MILLER *give their lines quickly, feverishly, for they fear that they may be interrupted at any moment.)*

LUCILLE. Not yet; but they wheel Mrs. Simms-Vane in here every afternoon. You're not safe here! *(Tries to hurry him to the window.)*

MILLER. *(Catching her by the arm)* Quick! Where does she keep the Thirty-three?

LUCILLE. *(Carelessly, as she jerks her arm away)* Why should I tell you?

MILLER. Going to hog the necklace yourself 'stead of divvying up with me, huh?

LUCILLE. No.

MILLER. Then what the hell's the matter with you?

LUCILLE. You've been taking that Minnie out again!

MILLER. Naw, I'm on the level with you.

LUCILLE. *(Scornfully)* Huh!

MILLER. Didn't I say we'd get married soon's we cop the necklace?

LUCILLE. *(Arrogantly)* I know you *said* that.

MILLER. Then, what's in your craw? Jealous again?

LUCILLE. Why not? I've got everything staked on you!

MILLER. And you can play it for all it's worth. It'll take both of us to steal the Thirty-three.

LUCILLE. Miller, it's a wonderful necklace.

MILLER. Worth forty thousand dollars.

LUCILLE. Thirty-three blue-white diamonds. Wouldn't think an old dame would be so stuck on it!

MILLER. No more than we are. *(Nudges her affectionately.)* Now, where does she keep it?

LUCILLE. In this room!

MILLER. This room?

LUCILLE. Yes, they say she comes in here to look at it; but no one's ever seen her do it!

MILLER. Good enough; we'll cop it this very afternoon!

LUCILLE. How?

MILLER. Listen, this is the dope.

LUCILLE. *(Eagerly)* Uh-huh.

MILLER. Servants are off to-day, 'cept you, the cook, and the old dame's companion. Cook's way down in the kitchen—and I've fixed it to get the companion away.

LUCILLE. How?

MILLER. Dennis is across the street—watching this window.

LUCILLE. Why?

MILLER. When the time's ready, I'll signal him with this handkerchief and right off the phone here will ring. You answer it.

LUCILLE. *(Puzzled)* What's the game?

MILLER. Dennis is going to send fake message—something about a phony check—that'll get Miss Jones out of the house. Want you to answer the phone so's to be sure it's Dennis. Then call her, understand?

LUCILLE. Yes!

MILLER. After that it'll be plain sailing.

LUCILLE. But Dennis'll want some of the boot for doing that?

MILLER. Naw, I promised him a tenner if he'd send the phone message and then beat it to the station and get a couple of tickets for us. *(Murmur of voices from off right.)*

LUCILLE. Oh, they're coming now. Better get away in a hurry! (MILLER *runs to the window.)*

MILLER. Don't forget to answer that phone!

LUCILLE. I won't! They're almost here! Hurry up and get out!

MILLER. No, I'm going to stay right here.

LUCILLE. But they'll see you!

MILLER. No, they won't. I'll slide behind this curtain. *(He slips behind one of the window curtains, which remain partly open. He is completely concealed.* LUCILLE *pretends to arrange articles on the desk, furtively glancing at right door.)*

(From right enter MISS JONES, *pushing an invalid's chair in which is seated* MRS. SIMMS-VANE.*)*

(MISS JONES, *the paid companion of* MRS. SIMMS-

VANE, *is a rather dull, systematic English woman, not in the least understanding her mistress, but as a result of long service, obeying her to the letter.* MRS. SIMMS-VANE, *a hopeless paralytic for twenty years, cannot move her chin a quarter of an inch to left or right. Her body is rigid; her cheeks are webbed with the fine wrinkles of the years; her eyes are beautiful with patience; and her mouth is lovely with the firmness of suffering. Once very beautiful, she is now, at the age of sixty, as inert as a faded flower. She wears a rich but simple dress of black silk with white lace at the throat.* MISS JONES *wheels the chair to left center, somewhat to rear, and facing the table and the mirror on the right wall. She lifts one of the invalid's hands and places it so that it rests easily on the arm of her chair. As she goes to the other side of the chair and arranges the other hand in a similar manner,* MILLER, *with his eye on* MISS JONES *and watched by* LUCILLE, *silently steps from behind the curtain, glances out the window, gives a quick wave of his handkerchief—the signal to the unseen Dennis—and slips behind the curtain again without being seen by either* MISS JONES *or* MRS. SIMMS-VANE.*)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(As* MISS JONES *starts to make a slight adjustment of the old lady's head against the back of her chair)* No, to the right. *(*MISS JONES *moves the head slightly.)* Too much. More to the left. *(*MISS JONES *moves the head again.)*

MISS JONES. May I ask why you always want your head faced that way?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Coolly amused)* You may *ask.*

(MRS. SIMMS-VANE'S *tone causes* MISS JONES *to step back abashed, and she does not venture the question. The telephone on the desk rings.* MISS JONES *starts toward it; but* LUCILLE *has already picked it up.)*

LUCILLE. I'll answer it, Miss Jones. *(Speaks into the telephone)* Hello—— Yes—— *Yes! (Glances in direction of* MILLER.*)* All right, I'll call her. *(Turns to* MISS JONES.*)* It's for you, Miss Jones.

MISS JONES. Thank you. *(Goes to telephone.)* Hello—— Yes—— Oh, is that so? Very well. I'll be right down to see about it. Thank you. Good-bye. *(Hangs up the receiver and goes to* MRS. SIMMS-VANE.*)* Mrs. Simms-Vane, that was the Empire National Bank on the phone.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes?

MISS JONES. The cashier has discovered what appears to be an alteration in a check you gave Andrews, the grocer. They asked me to go immediately to their down-town offices; and I told them I would.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Very well.

MISS JONES. *(To* LUCILLE*)* You will remain here with Mrs. Simms-Vane. There will be nothing to do for her. *(Goes to the door at right where she turns and says to* LUCILLE*)* Even though it is raining, she will take her daily ride at four as usual. By that time, probably, I shall return.

LUCILLE. *(With a superior air)* Very good, Miss Jones.

(Exit MISS JONES. *A moment's silence, then an outside door closes.* MILLER *steps out from behind the curtain and beckons for* LUCILLE *to come to him. She does so and together they step out into the room and look threateningly at* MRS.

SIMMS-VANE *for a moment. They are now in her range of vision and she stares at them without the flicker of an eyelash.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Calmly)* Lucille, who is this gentleman? (LUCILLE *fidgets.)* Why is he here? (LUCILLE *becomes more nervous.)*

MILLER. *(Brushing past* LUCILLE*)* I'll do the talking!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I fear, Lucille, that I have been mistaken in you.

MILLER. *(To* MRS. SIMMS-VANE*)* Now, there'll be no nonsense!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I think I understand.

MILLER. Better for you, if you do!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Sir, will you kindly step forward three or four steps?

MILLER. What for?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I am unable, because of my infirmity, to turn my head; and I prefer to talk looking into the eyes.

MILLER. *(Stepping in front of* MRS. SIMMS-VANE*)* We'll not have much talk. *(Quickly, to* LUCILLE*)* You mind that door. *(Points to door, which* LUCILLE *closes as* MILLER *goes to the telephone and cuts its green cord. Resuming his position in front of* MRS. SIMMS-VANE.*)* Now, Mrs. Simms-Vane, I'll tell you why I'm here.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes?

MILLER. I come for the Thirty-three, and you're going to tell me where it is.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Slight surprise)* So you call it the Thirty-*three?*

MILLER. Needn't pretend you don't understand what I'm talking about. I ain't got much time. Now, where is it? *(Points a menacing finger at* MRS. SIMMS-VANE'S *face. She merely smiles and*

looks at him without making the slightest movement.)

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Firmly, but softly)* Sir, you have made a mistake to come here.

MILLER. Mistake? Ha! *(Halfway laughs.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. It is true that I am a helpless invalid and cannot call for assistance; but there is that which will cause you to fail. You shall have a disaster.

LUCILLE. *(As she comes to* MILLER, *frightened)* Oh, Miller, what does she mean?

MILLER. *(Ignores* LUCILLE. *Speaks sneeringly to* MRS. SIMMS-VANE*)* You mean you'll call on God? Well, my nerve's good for that stuff.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Referring to* LUCILLE*)* Hers is not. (MILLER *turns and looks at* LUCILLE, *who has become very nervous.)*

LUCILLE. It's a lie! The old fossil!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(A little, slow smile passes over her face as she continues in her calm voice)* Nevertheless, I do not refer to divine assistance.

MILLER. Then, what do you mean?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I think you will fail, because you are not made of the material that succeeds. You are both of the base metals—unrestrained, passionate, and vulgar.

LUCILLE. *(Her vanity is hurt)* The idea!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes, and that is why you made a mistake to come into conflict with me.

MILLER. Bah!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. At the very outset, sir, you made a mistake.

MILLER. Mistake—what mistake?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Almost your first words disclosed the fact that you did not know where the necklace is laid away.

MILLER. You're not very clever yourself. You've just as well as admitted the Thirty-three's in this

room. *(Jerks off his raincoat, throws it on the floor, and starts to search for the Thirty-three among the papers in the writing-desk drawers.* LUCILLE *still keeps guard at the door.* MRS. SIMMS-VANE, *unable to turn her head, stares ahead at nothing.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(After a pause, in her same calm voice)* Will you trust in one who has never broken her word to anyone?

MILLER. *(Stops suddenly and looks at* MRS. SIMMS-VANE*)* What are you trying to get at?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Suppose I promise to reward you—(LUCILLE *starts forward jealously)*—both to the full? (LUCILLE *sinks back relieved.)*

MILLER. What are you giving us?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. The necklace is my most treasured possession, not because of its money value, but because my dear, dead husband gave it to me when we were young and very happy.

(LUCILLE *turns away, sickened by this expression of sentiment.)*

MILLER. What's that got to do with us?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. That is why I will not have it taken from me.

LUCILLE. Listen to her!

MILLER. *(Coarse laugh)* Ha!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then look out for yourselves. I warn you. (MILLER *walks back until he stands in front of* MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *Suddenly he takes a pistol from his pocket and thrusts the muzzle of it into her face.)*

MILLER. *(Growling)* Where's the thing hid? (MRS. SIMMS-VANE *slowly closes her eyes and slowly opens them again. He pushes the revolver nearer her.)* Where's it hid?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Do you think I fear that you will pull that trigger?

MILLER. Why wouldn't I?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Can you not see how beautiful that would be for me—a hopeless invalid?

MILLER. *(Not understanding)* Huh?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But it is too much to hope. You would not shoot me.

MILLER. I'll soon show you!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Ah, no, that would make a noise.

MILLER. *(Impatiently)* What if it did?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then you could not continue your search. No, I cannot hope that you will pull that trigger.

MILLER. *(Realizing the truth of her words, drops the pistol to his side)* You're a tough old nut.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Thank you, sir. That is very kind.

MILLER. Bah! *(Then to* LUCILLE*)* Pull out the books, girlie. We've got to frisk the whole room.

LUCILLE. *(Coming forward)* All right!

MILLER. Go through it systematic and fast; and look in the vases!

LUCILLE. Yes, yes! *(Begins to execute his commands.)*

MILLER. Remember, she said it was "laid away" —that's the cue.

LUCILLE. Uh-huh.

(MILLER *returns to the desk, tosses papers and boxes to the floor, opens the stamp box on the desk, finds a locked drawer, and feverishly splinters it open.* LUCILLE *is hastily pulling out the books from the shelves and searching the wall behind them for any secret hiding place of the necklace. The room is in a welter of disorder. Finally,* MILLER *returns to his revolver which he left on the table as he made his rounds of the room, stares down at it, and bites his lips.)*

MILLER. *(Growling)* Damn! Time wasted! *(Looks at* MRS. SIMMS-VANE *and takes a pair of steel pliers from his side pocket, opens them, and looks down at them.)* It's rough work; but it's got to be done. *(Goes to* MRS. SIMMS-VANE *and closes his hand over one of her white wrists. Her fingers move a little.)* Huh! There's some feeling in this hand. I thought so. *(He slips the toothed jaws of the pliers between the thumb and forefinger down upon the soft flesh in the crotch of her thumb and closes the pliers upon it.)* Now, where's the necklace? (MRS. SIMMS-VANE *silently stares at him.)* Better tell. *(She merely closes her eyes.)* You better tell! (LUCILLE *shudders as she sees that he is squeezing the pliers in his tightening grip.)* Curse you! Out with it! Where's the necklace?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. That is painful; but I do not think pain will ever be my master. I shall not tell you.

LUCILLE. Stop! Stop, Miller! The blood's coming!

MILLER. Let it come.

LUCILLE. But she won't tell! Oh, you're crushing the flesh! Stop! *(Starts to pull him away.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Opening her eyes)* Ah, she's weakened! I said you were both made of inferior stuff. This French doll of yours, sir, was willing to see you torture an old lady who cannot move and yet a few drops of red blood make her cry out. What a pair you are—all boastfulness; but your nerves are made of shoddy.

(MILLER *drops the pliers in his pocket, looks at* LUCILLE, *and sneers.)*

LUCILLE. *(To* MILLER*)* Don't! Don't look at me like that!

MILLER. Why not? The old dame's right about us. *(Outside, a clock strikes three o'clock.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Fretfully)* It's three. I ordered my hot milk for three.

MILLER. *(Wheeling toward* LUCILLE*)* The cook'll bring it in?

LUCILLE. *(Sullenly)* Perhaps.

MILLER. Quick, then! Go to the kitchen. Say she sent you for it. I'll take another look round the room. (LUCILLE *shrugs her shoulders and exits.* MILLER *starts to search in the desk drawers again.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Sees him in the mirror)* Young man, I see you're searching in those drawers again. I would not waste my time doing that.

MILLER. *(Startled)* Why not?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Perhaps I will tell you what you wish to know.

MILLER. What?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Come and stand in front of me.

MILLER. *(He does so, staring at her)* Well?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You may be surprised, sir, to hear that I cannot help admiring the boldness you have shown in coming here.

MILLER. Aw, what are you giving me now?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I have always been attracted by ability, wherever it showed itself and——

MILLER. *(With contempt)* Words, words.

MRS SIMMS-VANE. No-o, but you are a handsome young man, and it is a pity that your magnetism and power should be thrown away on such a worthless young woman as Lucille.

MILLER. Aw, Lucille's all right.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Pah! You saw her cringe!

MILLER. Well?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. A pretty face—that's all she is. And you are infatuated with her—you who could

win women far above her class. She stands in your way. This very occasion is an example of it.

MILLER. What are you driving at?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. In the next fifteen minutes she may cost you forty thousand dollars.

MILLER. *(Leaning nearer)* How's it figured?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I don't trust her; but I could —trade with you.

MILLER. Trade?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Did it not occur to you, sir, that forty thousand dollars is very little to me? If I spent it, it would be charged to my heirs.

MILLER. What's that got to do with the Thirty-three?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I would willingly send you a check for the amount, if you would go away.

MILLER. *(Scornfully)* Huh!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But it is too much to ask you to take my word for that. However, I could take yours.

MILLER. *(Eagerly)* Yes?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But not if Lucille were involved.

MILLER. Why not?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I love those stones the most of all material things—and I would not trust them to her.

MILLER. *(Glances toward door, then leans nearer to her, alert)* How's that again? Talk faster.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I cannot. I meant that if I could trust you—you alone—with the necklace until I could arrange to buy it back from you, I would pay you more for it than its appraised value.

MILLER. How much more?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Twenty-five per cent more.

MILLER. I'll do it! Where's the necklace?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But I fear the girl.

MILLER. *(Discounting her)* Oh, that girl?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes, you love her; and a man in love is not to be trusted.

MILLER. Aw, she's not the only girl I got.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. O-oh—and still I've no doubt you have even agreed to share your gains with her.

MILLER. Well?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. It is that which has invited my contempt.

MILLER. I never promised her a split. Besides, I know you're right about Lucille.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then twenty thousand dollars is a high price to pay for this cheap little creature's favor.

MILLER. Don't have to pay it—unless she knows I've got the sparklers.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Would you then?

MILLER. Yes, she's a little wildcat, and she'd squeal on me.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then you mean that you would not reveal to her that you have the necklace?

MILLER. Sure.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You mean that you would give me the chance to purchase back the diamonds from you?

MILLER. Yes.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You mean that you would promise to take nothing else from this house?

MILLER. What else is there?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. There is a stamp box on the writing desk. You opened it. I heard its click.

MILLER. What of it?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. It is made of solid gold.

MILLER. *(Surprised that he should have missed such a valuable article, picks it up and stares at it)* Gold? That made of gold?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes.

(Thinking MRS. SIMMS-VANE *cannot see him, he*

starts to pocket the stamp box. She sees his movement reflected in the mirror and gives a low chuckle of satisfaction. He is startled, not quite sure whether she saw his action or not. Quickly, but reluctantly, he puts the stamp box on the desk.)

MILLER. *(In an over-generous tone)* Well, what of it? I'd play straight; but how do I know that you——

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You would have the word of Justinia Simms-Vane. Her honor has never been questioned. It would last as long as your own.

MILLER. *(Stares at her a moment)* I'm no fool. Lucille's not worth the fuss. Where's the necklace?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Come near me. *(He does so.)* Open the buttons of my dress.

MILLER. *(Accusingly)* But you said it was "laid away."

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I chose my words carefully. Open my dress.

MILLER. *(Opens her dress and sees the necklace around her throat)* Judas Garryowen! She wears them! What stones! What stones!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Take it quickly. *(He does so and at once begins to pick the stones from their settings.)* What are you doing?

MILLER. Aw—— *(He is too busy to explain.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I say, what are you doing?

MILLER. Picking the stones from their settings.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But I don't understand——

MILLER. *(Picks out remaining stones)* Just a way we have. *(Drops chain into waste basket.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. What was that noise?

MILLER. Chain going into the basket. I take no chances.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But you will do me the favor to button my dress. Lucille——

MILLER. Yes, yes; but look at them! *(Gloats over diamonds.)* Thirty-three perfect ones! A-ah, what a handful! Look! *(Holds them before her.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. They are pretty; but my dress——

MILLER. All right. *(Drops stones in his right pocket, fastens her dress, and starts to adjust her lace collar.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I hear Lucille bringing——

MILLER. How you going to put her off the scent?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Leave that to me. If you are the gentleman I think you are, you will have her give me the milk.

MILLER. Well; but how will you fix her?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Just continue your search.

MILLER. But I've finished this room!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then try the next; but leave the girl to me.

MILLER. *(Takes out the diamonds, looks at them a moment)* All right. *(Walks away.)* But don't you play any tricks on me.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Sir, that will depend upon you. *(He misses her inference and starts going through the drawers again. Suddenly,* MRS. SIMMS-VANE *hears him stop. Reflected in the mirror on the wall before her she sees him reach for the gold stamp box on the desk, slowly grasp it, and put it in his pocket. She sighs and closes her eyes.)*

(LUCILLE *appears in the doorway, carrying a tray which holds a tall glass of hot milk.)*

MILLER. *(Seeing* LUCILLE*)* You got the milk, huh?

LUCILLE. Yes, but the cook wanted to bring it in herself.

MILLER. Well, I've frisked the room all over again.

LUCILLE. What'd you find?

MILLER. No luck. The old lady's done us.

LUCILLE. Look some more. We got lots more time.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I want my hot milk.

LUCILLE. Forget it! *(Sets tray on the table.)*

MILLER. *(Over-generous)* No, give her the milk.

LUCILLE. *(Surprised)* What's come over you?

MILLER. Come here. (LUCILLE *does so. Half whisper)* Listen, give her the milk and keep her busy. Do anything.

LUCILLE. What for?

MILLER. I want to see if there's anything worth picking up in the other rooms.

LUCILLE. But——?

MILLER. Go on; give her the milk. *(Astounded,* LUCILLE *stares at him; but she takes the milk to* MRS. SIMMS-VANE. MILLER *wanders through the door into the adjoining room. Again and again his shadow appears near the doorway, as though he were watching the women.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You forget, my dear, that I cannot move. Put the glass to my lips. (LUCILLE *does so.)* A little nearer. (LUCILLE *puts the glass nearer* MRS. SIMMS-VANE'S *lips.)* The other side. *(Peeved,* LUCILLE *glances at her; but moves the glass to the other side of* MRS. SIMMS-VANE'S *mouth.)* What's that? Dirt? Is that dirt in my milk? *(Impatiently,* LUCILLE *looks at the milk. Whispering)* Do not show any surprise, Lucille. Keep looking at the milk.

LUCILLE. *(Whispering)* Yes.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Whispering)* He has the necklace!

LUCILLE. *(Whispering)* Oh!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Whispering)* If you show him that you know, he will kill you. Don't move! *(Loudly)* Is it dirt in my milk? Look again.

LUCILLE. I'm trying to see. *(Whispering)* You're trying to make a fool of me!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Whispering)* No, but he has tricked you and means to leave you to your fate. He has the diamonds!

LUCILLE. *(Whispering)* Oh!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Whispering)* The necklace without the stones is in the wastebasket. The revolver—is on the table.

LUCILLE. *(In hushed voice, as* MILLER *enters)* Oh.

MILLER. *(Seeing* LUCILLE's *suspicious attitude, turns to* MRS. SIMMS-VANE*)* What are you trying to do—cut Lucille off from me? (LUCILLE *looks away.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Significantly)* Did you find it—what you came for?

MILLER. *(Hesitates, then sullenly)* No. *(Starts to look in the bookcases.* LUCILLE *sets glass on the table, runs to the wastebasket, looks in, and utters a cry of rage.* MILLER *turns swiftly.)*

LUCILLE. You've got it, you dog! *(Both rush for the revolver. She gets it.)* Stand back now!

MILLER. But, Lucille——

LUCILLE. You double-crossed me—after I loved you so!

MILLER. Listen, girlie, the old lady's framed us. I love you, girlie. You know me. You get your share! This was the only way I could get the necklace! It was all for you!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Oh, Lucille, you little fool! The other woman is the one!

LUCILLE. I thought so! I'm going to kill you!

MILLER. *(Desperately)* I love you!

LUCILLE. Oh! *(Pained, she closes her eyes.* MILLER *seizes a brass candlestick from the table and hurls it blindly at her, striking the wall behind her.)* You dog! *(She shoots. He falls to the*

floor.) Oh, what have I done? What have I done? *(Covers her face. Outside a policeman's whistle is blown twice.* LUCILLE *is still too horrified by her crime to hear it; but* MRS. SIMMS-VANE *smiles knowingly and closes her eyes.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I said it would be disaster for him to cross me. He broke his agreement with me. He did not know that I could see him in the mirror over the table when he took the little stamp box. *(Outside the police whistle again.)*

LUCILLE. *(Hears whistle)* O-oh, the police!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. And now, you are a murderess!

LUCILLE. *(Running to her)* No! No! Please save me!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I wonder if you are really bad. I doubt it. You are too young to be put in jail.

LUCILLE. You will save me?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I shall tell a little white lie for you, if you deserve it.

LUCILLE. *(Piteous fright)* Oh, if you only would! *(Off right the doorbell rings.* LUCILLE *becomes more frightened and glances apprehensively toward the door.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I shall say you shot him in defending me. But we must hurry! That may be the police ringing now.

LUCILLE. Oh!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Put the revolver in my lap. (LUCILLE *does so.)*

LUCILLE. Oh, I don't deserve to be saved!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Never mind. Go put your hand in the young man's coat pocket.

LUCILLE. Oh, no! I'm afraid to touch him!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Do as I say. *(Reluctantly,* LUCILLE *goes to* MILLER. *She starts to reach for his*

pocket, shudders, and recoils from him.) The right side. (LUCILLE *is startled that* MRS. SIMMS-VANE *should know the correct pocket; but she quickly thrusts her hand into it.)* Do you feel the diamonds?

LUCILLE. *(Gloating)* Yes; here they are. *(As she lifts the stones from* MILLER'S *pocket, she pauses, swiftly putting back a stray wisp of hair over her right ear.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Are you sure you have all of them?

LUCILLE. Yes!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You did not leave a single one?

LUCILLE. *(Overconfident)* No, I'm sure!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then count each one and drop it into my hand.

(LUCILLE *is startled, and fears that she has been trapped, but quickly recovers her composure.)*

LUCILLE. *(Counting the diamonds into* MRS. SIMMS-VANE'S *hand—the one that was not tortured by* MILLER*)* One, two, three—how wonderful they are! *(Insistent ringing of the doorbell causes her to hasten her counting.)* Four, five, six—— *(She quickly continues to count toward thirty.)*

(The doorbell has ceased ringing. An outside door opens and closes. A growing murmur of voices. A man exclaims, "But we heard a shot fired!" A woman replies, "But it couldn't have been here!" The man, "We'll have a look anyway.")

LUCILLE. *(Still counting)* Thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two—*(A pause of surprise)*—thirty-three!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Suspiciously)* Thirty-*three?*

LUCILLE. *(Bewildered, but relieved)* Yes, thirty-three.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then I have the stones my husband gave me—all back again?

LUCILLE. All.

(From right enter MISS JONES, *in hat and raincoat, followed by Police Inspector.)*

MISS JONES. *(To Inspector)* I'll prove to you there was nothing—— *(Seeing* MRS. SIMMS-VANE, *rushes to her.)* Oh, Mrs. Simms-Vane, are you all right?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes.

MISS JONES. Nothing has happened?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. No—everything.

(Policeman GARRITY *appears in the doorway.)*

GARRITY. *(To* MISS JONES, *as he appears)* Old lady safe? (MILLER *stirs feebly.* MISS JONES *sees him.)*

MISS JONES. Yes, but, Inspector—*(Points to* MILLER*)*—look!

MILLER. *(Feebly)* Hello, Inspector.

INSPECTOR. *(To* GARRITY*)* Miller, the Hawk! *(To* MRS. SIMMS-VANE*)* Excuse me, ma'am, but who shot this man?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. The maid.

LUCILLE. I was defending her!

MILLER. That's a lie! The little cat was the "inside" on this job. We messed it up, and she shot me. She thought I double-crossed her.

LUCILLE. Oh, how he talks! I never saw that man before in all my life! Did I, Mrs. Simms-Vane?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. My dear young woman, I tried to give you a chance. Now I advise the officers to arrest you. You were his accomplice.

LUCILLE. But you said—you promised——

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Certainly. But in my necklace there were not the number of stones you counted out to me. You kept one.

LUCILLE. No! No!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes, you did. The necklace was given to me by my husband on my thirty-fourth, not my thirty-third, birthday. You thought I did not know the number of my own stones; so you kept one.

MILLER. Ha! That serves the little devil proper. But it's just like her! I know her tricks! Look under the hair over her ears!

(INSPECTOR *and* GARRITY *start to examine her; but she breaks away from them.)*

LUCILLE. Keep away from me! I'll give her the stone! *(She reaches under the hair over her right ear and throws the diamond into* MRS. SIMMS-VANE'S *lap.)* You old hag!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Miss Jones—(MISS JONES *comes forward)*—have the officers take these persons away.

(MISS JONES *nods to the officers to remove* LUCILLE *and* MILLER. GARRITY *takes* LUCILLE *into his custody and they exeunt right. The* INSPECTOR *helps* MILLER *up and starts toward the door with him, where* MILLER *turns round.)*

MILLER. *(Savagely to* MRS. SIMMS-VANE*)* You'll not beat us again! *(The* INSPECTOR *pulls him out.)*

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. *(Serenely ignoring his remark)* Miss Jones— (MISS JONES *goes nearer to her, waiting)*—you may order my carriage as usual.

(MISS JONES *is surprised, but quickly nods assent and starts toward the door.)*

CURTAIN

HE CAME SEEING

Biblical drama. 1 act. By Mary P. Hamlin.

3 males, 2 females. Interior. Biblical costumes.

This little Biblical play, written by the author of *The Rock*, is a dramatic presentation of the story of a young man who comes under the personal influence of Christ and casts off his earlier belief in order to embrace Christianity.

I LAY IN ZION

Drama in verse. 1 act. By William Gibson.

4 males, 4 females. Interior. Costumes, Palestinian and Roman. 40 minutes.

The high priest's palace following the arrest of Jesus. Peter comes to learn of his Master's fate. An old woman repeats to him Jesus's prediction that Peter will deny him thrice before the cock crows. Peter's wife spies in the courtroom, and reports that Jesus will be crucified. He is recognized, denies Jesus thrice, and the cock crows. Left alone, he condemns himself and all men at their worst: the old woman reminds him that this is the rock the church must be built on. Faced with a choice between safety or crucifixion in going to Rome, Peter chooses Rome and the cross.

(Royalty, $5.00.)

WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH

Biblical play. 1 act. By Lloyd Corrigan.

3 males. Interior.

The scene is Jerusalem, in the year of our Lord 33. It is a spring evening. Nathan, assisted by a maimed youth, is cleaning up after the Passover Feast which has just been celebrated by Christ and His apostles. The youth's father, who hates the Nazarene, has heard of the affair and comes to command his son home. In the ensuing dispute he discloses the coming betrayal. The youth's brilliant faith and miraculous gesture astonish the father, and he confesses the place of the betrayal. The youth runs off to warn Christ; but we know that he is already too late.

Early Frost

by DOUGLAS PARKHIRST

Drama—1 Act

5 Female—Interior

A tender, yet gripping story of two sisters, Hannah and Louise, who live in a rambling, old house. Hannah has been considered peculiar ever since childhood, when a missing playmate was believed carried off by gypsies. When Alice, the sisters' little niece, comes to live with them, Hannah fearfully insists that she is the missing child returned. While playing in the attic, Alice is visited by a strange illusion, which almost leads her to solve the mystery of fifty years ago. Hannah, fearing her long-guarded secret will be discovered, tries to silence the little girl. It is this tense, cat-and-mouse game between the two that brings the play to a startling climax and affords the actors an opportunity for skillful playing, while holding the audience spellbound.

An Overpraised Season

by RICHARD S. DUNLOP

A Play of Ideas—1 Act

4 male, 2 female—No setting required

A powerful and touching story, "An Overpraised Season" won six out of nine possible awards at the one-act contest in which it premiered. Numerous problems facing today's intelligent and sensitive adolescents are treated in the 40 minute play, which, in episode form, concerns two boys and a girl; a domineering, religiously fanatic mother; and a selfish, egocentric father. A narrator, somewhat like the Stage Manager of "Our Town," expounds the philosophy of the play. A quality play, "Season" is designed for advanced student performers.

IF MEN PLAYED CARDS AS WOMEN DO

by GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

Satirical comedy—1 Act

4 Men—Modern Costumes

A brilliant satire for men. The fun of this comic sketch is derived from the fact that a group of men at the bridge table speak, behave, and think after the manner in which women are supposed to conduct their game.

THE STILL ALARM

by GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

Satirical comedy—1 Act

5 M[illegible]—Modern and Fireman's Costumes

The scene is in the bedroom of a hotel which is on fire. The fun lies in the manner in which it is put out. In the face of most exciting danger, the characters play in the well-bred manner of English drawing-room actors.

WHEN MEN REDUCE AS WOMEN DO

by OTTO KICKS

Comedy—1 Act

5 Men—Modern Costumes

What happens when a bunch of men gather and talk like women about their efforts to lose weight results in a riot of laughter.

OF POEMS . . . YOUTH, *and* SPRING

COMEDY, 1 ACT—*by* JOHN LOGAN

1 male, 1 female, 3 voices; 4 chorus members

Concerns the first romance of a boy and a girl in high school. The play's four scenes correspond to the seasons of the year; and each season represents a stage in the couple's romance, spring being when they meet and winter when they part. Each season is introduced by two small choruses which, in a mood of light humor and fantasy, tease and scold and provide contrast to the light drama of the romance. They also act incidental roles in the story and perform stagehand duties.

BRIDGES . . . Are When You Cross Them

COMEDY, 1 ACT—*by* MELVIN B. SHAFFER

3 male, 2 female—Interior

This American family is in San Francisco on another leg of a sightseeing tour. Father has everything laid out exactly and punctually, so that the city can be covered in one day. He does his sightseeing by telescope from the hotel window, but each of the other members of the family is given assignments and required to render reports that may be shared with the others. It's all very orderly and by-the-numbers. Except that the daughter is wayward. She's the kind who, on seeing the ocean, stays all day to enjoy it. She even begins to see things that aren't there, like the Golden Gate Bridge. The unimaginative members of the family, however, cannot see it, and so flatly state that it does not exist.

COLUMBINE CUM LAUDE

COMEDY, 1 ACT—*by* LYDA NAGEL

3 males, 3 females—Interior

One fine morning Columbine awakes to find a thought in her head. This leads the pretty flirt, who has been pursuing Harlequin for five hundred years, into the arms of a stodgy professor, who whisks her away for a "mortarboard" marriage. Harlequin, always so concerned with himself, is rocked out of his boredom by the discovery that he has a broken heart. With the aid of his friend, Pierrot, Harlequin recaptures for a fleeting instant what he loves, but has he truly learned that, when we change what we most desire, we destroy it? Only Columbine knows the answer, and she will never tell.

THE APOLLO OF BELLAC

COMEDY

Adapted by MAURICE VALENCY

From the French of Jean Giraudoux

9 males, 3 females—Interior

Here, in long one-act form, is the quintessence of Giraudoux' extraordinary imagination and style. The scene is set in an Office of Inventions. (Typical invention: a book that reads itself.) A shy girl comes for a job. She is ignored, until a nondescript little man from the town of Bellac comes to her aid. He demonstrates that she can have her way with any man if she will, upon meeting him, declare that he is handsome and compare him to the statue of the Apollo of Bellac (non-existent). This she does, beginning hesitantly with the clerk and working up most successfully to the Chairman of the Board. The play is alive with wry and trenchant observations. Moral: "The best career for a female is to be a woman."

(Royalty, $25.00)

A RESOUNDING TINKLE

COMEDY—1 ACT

By N. F. SIMPSON

1 male, 2 females—Interior

It would be wrong to say that nothing surprises the Paradocks, Bro and Middie. It's just that they take in their stride the things that would surprise us. The elephant in their garden, for instance, has actually been ordered, but this year the shop has made a mistake and sent the wrong size. Quite obviously they must find a name for it—shall they call it Mr. Trench for the sixth year in succession?—or should they swap it with a neighbor for a boa-constrictor, even if the latter does need lengthening. The arrival of Uncle Ted does cause Middie to raise her eyebrows momentarily, for he has become bored with being a he and is now an elegantly dressed young woman for a change. Because their social habits are different from ours—you are not offered a drink by these Paradocks but a read for refreshments—their talk satirizes the life of suburbia, and in the intervals of amusing, turns a mildly disconcerting eye on all of us

(Royalty, $10.00.)

HANDBOOK

for

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By Dorothy Lee Tompkins

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Because of the large type, the large size of the pages (9" x 12"), and the flexible metal binding, *Here's How* will lie flat when opened and can be laid on a workbench for a director to read while in a *standing* position.

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